

June 10, 2009: Congressman Wittman Requests Veterans Funding

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Rob Wittman, along with Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Veterans Affairs Committee, today called on Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt (D-SC) to utilize the "reserve funds" he imbedded in the House Budget Resolution to pay for key benefits promised to America's military personnel and their families, military retirees and veterans.

"This is a great opportunity to finally fund concurrent receipt for disabled veterans, eliminate the Widow's Tax and improve healthcare coverage for our reservists, all without adding a penny to the deficit. We owe it to our service personnel, both active and retired, to hold up our end of the bargain," said Wittman.

Republicans on the Armed Services Committee attempted to force the Budget Committee Chairman to utilize the "reserve funds" in a similar manner last year, only to be blocked by a budget technicality. In preparation for committee consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 on June 16, Wittman and House Republicans are again calling on the Budget Committee Chairman to identify the necessary offsets so the promise of the "reserve funds" may become real.

A copy of the letter follows:

The Honorable John Spratt

Chairman

U.S. House Committee on the Budget

207 Cannon House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Spratt:

Last week during the Budget Committee hearing with Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, you noted that the President's Budget is full of placeholders and promises. We would also note that the Concurrent Budget Resolution for Fiscal Year 2010 is also filled with place holders and promises called reserve funds. You also stated that "...The proof will be in the pudding, as they say, on how Congress and the administration actually implement..." these placeholders. We couldn't agree more with the sentiment of your statement.

As you are aware, the reserve fund created by section 324 of the budget resolution would permit you to provide, in a deficit neutral manner, budget allocations that would complete the promise of concurrent receipt for disabled military retirees (S.546); eliminate the Widows Tax created by the offset between Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities and Veterans' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) (H.R.775/S.535); improve healthcare coverage for reserve component members (H.R. 972); and fund President Obama's initiative to provide concurrent receipt for disabled military retirees with less than 20 years service. Cutting waste, fraud and abuse amounting to 0.14 per cent of the spending allocated by the budget resolution would provide the necessary offsets to fund these priorities.

Therefore, we, the Republican signatories from the committees below, strongly encourage you to exercise your authority under section 324 to make concrete and real the promise of the reserve fund: to ensure America's military personnel and their families, military retirees, and veterans have the support they so richly deserve.

Sincerely,

Joe Wilson (SC); Ranking Member, Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel

Steve Buyer (IN); Ranking Member, Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (CA)

Roscoe G. Bartlett (MD)

Mac Thornberry (TX)

Walter B. Jones (NC)

W. Todd Akin (MO)

J. Randy Forbes (VA)

Jeff Miller (FL)

Frank A. LoBiondo (NJ)

Rob Bishop (UT)

Michael Turner (OH)

John Kline (MN)

Mike Rogers (AL)

Trent Franks (AZ)

Bill Shuster (PA)

Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA)

Michael Conaway (TX)

Doug Lamborn (CO)

Rob Wittman (VA)

Mary Fallin (OK)

Duncan Hunter (CA)

John Fleming (LA)

Mike Coffman (CO)

Tom Rooney (FL)

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.